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Aerospace museum includes AFRL display

by Ranney Adams, Propulsion Directorate

EDWARDS AIR FORCE BASE, Calif. — The small town of Boron, nestled adjacent to the Air Force Research Laboratory's rocket research facilities and Edwards Air Force Base opened the doors April 5 to its newest downtown feature, The Saxon Aerospace Museum.

It is named after the late Col. Vernon P. Saxon, former Air Force Flight Test Center vice commander and noted test pilot. Saxon was a graduate of West Point Academy and Air Force Test Pilot School.

The dedication ceremony's keynote speaker was the honorable Claude Bolton, assistant secretary of the Army for Acquisition, Logistics and Technology.

A retired Air Force major general and test pilot school classmate of Saxon's, Bolton told the audience of nearly 300 people, "Vern embodied the West Point spirit of duty, honor and country. I doubt that there is a weapon system flying in the Air Force not touched by his contributions."

With tributes to its namesake, the centennial anniversary of manned powered flight, and many rocket propulsion images never before seen by the public, the museum was opened for the first time on April 5, 2003.

As visitors approach the new museum, they can see the huge granite ridge of the Air Force Research Laboratory's Edwards Research Site and its Propulsion Directorate. The ridge is distinctive with its multi-storied rocket test stands, which for nearly 55 years have provided the nation with its launch vehicles.

Taking part in the dedication ceremony, 1st Lt. Chad Fairchild, the site's executive officer said, "Boron is our closest neighbor and community. Its residents have witnessed many of the nation's firsts in rocket propulsion. The community has provided a home for many of our employees, and we have provided opportunities for many of its promising young people."

AFRL's museum display included the "AFRL Decade Series" depicting Army Air Corp and Air Force aerospace research efforts and highlights the eras being depicted throughout the building. As visitors enter the museum, a large display provides insight into the plan, people, place and purpose of the laboratory's nearby Edwards Research Site covering 65 square miles of Edwards.

The lab display included a gridwall screen ascending 16 feet to the ceiling with illustrations of the rocket legacy of the facility mounted on both sides. Surrounding the rocket wall, multiple display walls contain rocket history, historic figures, lab legacy and current research contributions. @